

New Jersey Department of Education
NCLB/Title I
Peer Review Process for School Improvement Plans

Background

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) mandates that all students must meet proficiency by 2014. To attain this goal, New Jersey schools must meet proficiency benchmarks, making adequate yearly progress (AYP). Title I Schools that miss their AYP targets for two or more consecutive years in the same content area (language arts literacy/mathematics) go into improvement status. Title I schools identified as in need of improvement must apply certain sanctions (school choice, supplemental educational services, technical assistance) including the development of a school improvement plan.

The school improvement plan must be developed within three months of the school being identified for improvement. The plan must cover a two-year period and be developed in consultation with parents, school staff, the district, and outside experts [NCLB §1116(b)(3)(A)]. The required elements of the plan are provided in the NCLB Consolidated Application; a copy of the applicable pages is attached.

The school improvement plan must be submitted for peer review, using a process established by the district. The peer review team is composed of “teachers and administrators from higher-performing schools or districts similar to the one in improvement, but significantly more successful in meeting the learning needs of their students.” Reviewers with “demonstrated effectiveness and recognized expertise in school improvement” evaluate the plan’s quality and likelihood of success, and make suggestions for revisions. The peer review must be conducted within 45 days of the plan’s submission. After the review, the district works with the school to make necessary revisions and approves the completed plan [*LEA and School Improvement Non-Regulatory Guidance*; United States Department of Education; January 7, 2004].

Benefits of Collaboration

Schools in need of improvement can expect to benefit from the expertise of educators from higher-performing schools and districts. The peer review team will draw on their successful experiences in the classroom, share information about winning instructional strategies and programs, and offer guidance in areas that need attention. Schools needing improvement can implement the activities that team members have used to improve academic achievement in their own schools and districts. Since they are from schools or districts similar to the one in improvement status, the sharing of ideas is more likely to bring about positive change.

Peer Review Process Elements

To help districts establish and execute a peer review process, the Office of Title I Program Planning and Accountability has developed the following process elements and

evaluation form. Districts are not bound to use this process; however, the requirements of NCLB must be included in the process.

Composition of the Peer Review Team

Each peer review team will be composed of at least three teachers and administrators from higher-performing schools and districts similar to the one in improvement. Schools can be from within the district or from other districts. Team members should be chosen based on their experience with school improvement issues and expertise in the content area(s) where students underperformed.

The Peer Review Process

- ❑ **Preparation:** The school and/or district will provide each peer review team member with a copy of the school improvement plan, the school's needs assessment and priority problem description, and the school's assessment results, along with any additional pertinent documentation. The plan and documentation must be such to convince an experienced professional that the school will implement the required elements of the school improvement plan according to the intent of NCLB. The material should be organized so that the team can conduct an efficient review. For example, evidence to accompany each required element in the school improvement plan should be identified and include a brief narrative explaining its purpose.

A district representative should be selected to interface with the peer review team, when required. This representative is responsible for assisting the team in obtaining adequate and appropriate information for the review.

- ❑ **Review Team:** A liaison will be selected from the team to interface with the district/school on all issues relevant to the peer review, including requests for additional information and submission of the report.

Teams should employ the following steps to conduct the peer review:

- Each member of a peer review team reads the entire submitted proposed school improvement plan and other documents, formulating any questions for clarification or requests for additional information.
- Reviewers provide their expert professional judgment based on the plan and other materials submitted and offer suggestions for improving the plan. Feedback should be constructive with examples provided, when possible.
- After team members review the plan, the team meets to discuss their recommendations and record a consensus report, which is presented to the district.

- ❑ **Review Criteria:** The school improvement plan must include all required elements as defined by NCLB. (Teams can use the attached evaluation form to direct their review of the required elements.) The review of the school improvement plan is evaluated against the required elements. Reviewers should also judge the plan elements on their likelihood of success.

If there is an approved schoolwide plan, this may be revised to include any elements that are not addressed.

Team members should offer concrete suggestions, when feasible, and draw on their own background and expertise to help the school refine its plan for improving the academic proficiency of its students. Suggestions should be presented as options rather than prescriptive instructions. Feedback should be informative and consistent with professional standards and best practices.

- ❑ **Submission of Report:** The team's report is the compilation of the recommendations of the team members. There should be consensus among the team members. The report evaluates whether the school meets the particular required elements based on the totality of the plan and submitted documentation. A written report of the team's recommendations is submitted to the district by the liaison. The report should include a brief statement of the degree to which the plan meets the NCLB requirements and the changes needed. More detail and suggestions are included for each required element. Peer review team members should be available, if necessary, to clarify their suggestions.
- ❑ **Plan Revisions and Approval:** The district works with the school to make revisions based on the peer review. When the school improvement plan meets the requirements of the statute and regulations, the district approves the plan. The school must implement the plan as soon as possible, preferably within the school year when the school was identified for improvement, but no later than the beginning of the following school year [NCLB §1116(b)].

Time Frame for Review

The peer review process must be completed within 45 days of the submission of the school improvement plan, as required by NCLB.

**NCLB CONSOLIDATED APPLICATION
TITLE I – SCHOOL IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT**

Plan Report

(complete one for each school in need of improvement)

LEA: _____ **County:** _____ **Project Code: NCLB** _____ **-06 School:** _____

School Improvement Plan Committee

- ☐ **Date(s) of Meetings/Consultations:** _____
- ☐ **Parents:**
Number _____ Grades/Programs Represented _____
- ☐ **School Staff:**
Classroom teachers (number) _____
Positions Represented (number): Reading Specialist _____ Math Specialist _____ Principal _____ Vice Principal _____
School Facilitators _____ Learning Consultant _____ Other (specify) _____
- ☐ **LEA Representatives:**
Number _____
Positions _____
- ☐ **Outside Experts:** (name of facility)
Institution of Higher Education _____
Technical Assistance agencies (non-profit) _____ Consultants (for profit) _____
Other (specify) _____
- ☐ **Peer Reviewers:**
☐ Teacher ☐ Administrator From: _____
Area of Expertise: ☐ School Improvement ☐ Content Expert. Identify content area: _____
☐ Teacher ☐ Administrator From: _____
Area of Expertise: ☐ School Improvement ☐ Content Expert. Identify content area: _____
☐ Teacher ☐ Administrator From: _____
Area of Expertise: ☐ School Improvement ☐ Content Expert. Identify content area: _____

**NCLB CONSOLIDATED APPLICATION
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| Essential Elements |
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| <p>1. What strategies, programs and/or activities does the school improvement plan include to address each of the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• teaching and learning in core academic subjects;• professional development• technical assistance; and• parent involvement. <p>2. Indicate the plan's measurable goals for all subgroups in each of the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• teaching and learning in core academic subjects;• professional development• technical assistance; and• parent involvement. <p>3. Describe the scientifically based research used to support the plan's strategies, programs and/or activities for teaching and learning in the core academic subjects?</p> <p>4. What extended day and/or extended year programs and activities that will be incorporated, as appropriate, that the plan includes to address teaching and learning in the core academic subjects?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Title I – School in need of Improvement Plan Report (continued)</p> |
| <p>5. Describe the professional development activities that will be implemented to address:</p> |

- the teaching and learning process to increase content knowledge;
- the use of scientifically based instructional strategies in core academic subjects;
- the alignment of classroom activities with academic content standards and assessments;
- training to analyze classroom and school-level data to inform instruction

6. What provisions are in the school improvement plan to support high-quality, structured mentoring of new teachers, including professional development activities?

7. Describe the steps the school will take to provide the parents of each student with written notice about the school's identification for improvement?

8. What resources will be allocated and/or reallocated to support implementation of the school improvement plan?

9. Explain the responsibilities of the LEA and the SEA in implementing the plan and providing, or providing for, technical assistance.

10. Explain the peer review process used for review of this improvement plan.

Attach additional pages as required.

*Must complete separate page for each school in need of improvement.

Title I School Improvement Plan Peer Review Team Evaluation Form

| Plan Elements | Questions to Guide Review | Plan Compliance | Recommendations |
|---|--|-----------------|-----------------|
| <p>School Improvement Plan Committee must include the following members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents • School staff • District representatives • Outside experts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have parents with children in different grades been included? • Have content specialists, teachers, and administrators been included? • Have outside experts been included? | | |
| <p>What strategies, programs and/or activities does the school improvement plan include to address each of the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching and learning in core academic subjects • Professional development • Technical assistance • Parent involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are programs identified that address deficiencies? • Are programs research-based? • Are professional development activities planned that address identified deficiencies? • Is technical assistance described that addresses identified deficiencies? • Have parent involvement activities been described? | | |
| <p>Indicate the plan's measurable goals for each of the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching and learning in core academic subjects • Professional development • Technical assistance • Parent involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have realistic goals been set that can be measured to show improvement? • Are goals described for teaching strategies and student achievement of core subjects? How will success be measured? • Are the positive results of professional development activities measurable? Are the goals described sufficiently? | | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are achieved results from technical assistance measurable? How will they be measured and what are the expected results? • Can parental involvement activities be measured for student success? Are the goals identified? | | |
| Describe the scientifically based research used to support the plan's strategies, programs and/or activities for teaching and learning in the core academic subjects? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientifically based programs and activities are described/identified. • Scientifically based instructional strategies are described/identified. • Has the plan described how these will be implemented within the school? | | |
| What extended day and/or extended year programs and activities, as appropriate, does the plan include to address teaching and learning in the core academic subjects? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have extended school programs and activities been described? • Are these programs and activities geared to the core subjects? • Are the scientifically based programs/strategies used? | | |
| <p>Describe the professional development activities that will be implemented to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teaching and learning process to increase content knowledge • The use of scientifically based instructional strategies in core academic subjects • The alignment of classroom activities with academic content standards and assessments • Training to analyze | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will professional development help improve students' academic progress? • Does professional development address scientifically based strategies? • Do professional development activities focus on closing the achievement gap? • Are data analysis activities included in the professional development plan? | | |

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| classroom and school-level data to inform instruction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the professional development plan described in sufficient detail? • Have professional development activities focused on priority problems identified in the needs assessment? | | |
| What provisions are in the school improvement plan to support high-quality, structured mentoring of new teachers? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a mentoring program been described? • Will the program provide sufficient support for new teachers? • Are mentoring activities meaningful and of sufficient frequency for success? | | |
| Describe the steps the school will take to provide the parents of each student with written notice about the school's identification for improvement? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a process been described for parental notification? • Are parental notification dates compliant with NCLB requirements? • Are notifications understandable and in different languages, if applicable? | | |
| What resources will be allocated and/or reallocated to support implementation of the school improvement plan? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are school resources described that will sufficiently implement the plan? • Are district resources described that will sufficiently implement the plan? • Are elements of the plan impossible to implement due to lack of resources? | | |
| Explain the responsibilities of the district and the NJDOE in implementing the plan and providing, or providing for, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What technical assistance is the district providing to the school? • What technical assistance is | | |

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| technical assistance. | the NJDOE providing to the school? | | |
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